

Dear Mr. Gautreau:

During the public meeting of the Mississippi River Commission held in Houma, Louisiana, on August 23, 2002, Mr. Mike Babin presented comments on areas of concern to your office and submitted for the record a formal statement that expresses the views of your office and recommends improvements and continuing work on the Mississippi River and Tributaries (MR&T) flood control project. The responses below follow the order of topics submitted in your statement to the Commission.

Recommendations for Improvements in the Pontchartrain Levee District

As noted in your statement, all mainline Mississippi River levees within the Pontchartrain Levee District are up to or above the designated grade.

Lack of funding continues to delay closing the slope pavement gaps at the Ben Hurr area of East Baton Rouge Parish, Baton Rouge-Burnside Reach, and the Burnside-St. Charles/Jefferson Parish Line Reach. We anticipate appropriation of sufficient Fiscal Year 2003 funding to complete closure of all east bank pavement gaps and will schedule this work as soon as funding permits.

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Each year the revetted banks on the Mississippi River are surveyed, monitored, and inspected for bank scour and bank caving. The New Orleans District will continue to repair foreshore dikes, upper bank stone paving, and the articulated concrete mat revetments in order to protect the flood control and navigation systems along the Mississippi River. The Corps has requested funds for construction of the foreshore protection dike at 81 Mile Point near Darrow and will schedule this work as soon as funding permits.

The New Orleans District staff will work with the Pontchartrain Levee District to replace the sand/clay gravel in the levee crown with crushed limestone. The stone would be purchased by the Corps and spread by the Pontchartrain Levee

District. The work will be scheduled as funding and priorities permit.

Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity, Hurricane Protection, St. Charles Parish

The New Orleans District is continuing efforts to expedite the construction of the Lake Pontchartrain and Vicinity project in St. Charles Parish. Although the Corps has not received annual appropriations for Fiscal Year 2003, we anticipate the need to secure additional project funds to maintain the construction schedule. If this happens, we believe that additional funds can be reprogrammed into the project during Fiscal Year 2003. The District is proceeding as rapidly as possible with the design and construction of this project.

Construction of the Cross Bayou Drainage Structure is underway and we expect to complete work by November 2002. The St. Rose Drainage Structure is scheduled for award in November 2002. Work on the remaining drainage structures, Almedia and Walker Canal, is also scheduled for award in November 2002 with completion of those structures scheduled for 2003. The work at the gap of the Gulf South Pipeline will begin in January 2003 and is scheduled to be completed by March 2004. The contract to close the final gap (at the Canadian National Railroad crossing) is scheduled for award in March 2003. This action will provide a closed system of protection for the east bank of St. Charles Parish.

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Amite River and Tributaries, Bayou Manchac Watershed

The Commission appreciates your support of our study to evaluate the flooding and ecosystem restoration in the Bayou Manchac Watershed, and we realize the need to maintain the project schedule.

The New Orleans District completed the initial screening phase and presented our findings to you on September 23, 2002, and to the various stakeholders on October 10, 2002. The District completed a preliminary hydrologic model to evaluate various measures to reduce flood damage and provide ecosystem restoration. Costs and stage lowerings for the various

alternatives were estimated to assist in deciding the direction of the study.

The Commission appreciates receiving your comments and looks forward to hearing from you or members of your staff at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Don T. Riley
Brigadier General, U. S. Army
President Designee, Mississippi
River Commission